



## The Friendship of Christ

*Robert Hugh Benson*

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It is at once the privilege and the burden of Catholics that they know so much of Jesus Christ. It is their privilege, since an intelligent knowledge of the Person and the attributes and the achievements of Incarnate God is an infinitely greater wisdom than all the rest of the sciences put together. To have a knowledge of the Creator is incalculably a more noble thing than to have a knowledge of His Creation. Yet it is a burden as well; for the splendour of this knowledge may be so great as to blind us to the value of its details. The blaze of the Divinity to him who sees it may be so bright as to bewilder him with regard to the humanity. The unity of the wood vanishes in the perfection of the trees. Catholics then, above all others, are prone -- through their very knowledge of the mysteries of faith, through their very apprehension of Jesus Christ as their God, their High Priest, their Victim, their Prophet and their King -- to forget that His delights are to be with the sons of men more than to rule the Seraphim, that, while His Majesty held Him on the throne of His Father, His Love brought Him down on pilgrimage that He might transform His servants into His friends. For example, devout souls often complain of their loneliness on earth. They pray, they frequent the sacraments, they do their utmost to fulfil the Christian precepts; and, when all is done, they find themselves solitary. There could scarcely be a more evident proof of their failure to understand one at least of the great motives of the Incarnation. They adore Christ as God, they feed on Him in Communion, cleanse themselves in His precious Blood, look to the time when they shall see Him as their Judge; yet of that intimate knowledge of and companionship with Him in which the Divine Friendship consists, they have experienced little or nothing. They long, they say, for one who can stand by their side and upon their own level, who can not merely remove suffering, but can himself suffer with them, one to whom they can express in silence the thoughts which no speech can utter; and they seem not to understand that this is the very post which Jesus Christ Himself desires to win, that the supreme longing of His Sacred Heart is that He should be admitted, not merely to the throne of the heart or to the tribunal of conscience, but to that inner secret chamber of the soul where a man is most himself, and therefore most utterly alone.

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